

Michigan Agriculture News



FROM STATE SENATOR

RON JELINEK

Serving the 21st District

P.O. Box 30036 • Lansing, MI 48909-7536

PHONE: (517) 373-6960 • TOLL-FREE: 1-866-305-2121

FAX: (517) 373-0897

E-MAIL: senrjelinek@senate.michigan.gov

Dear Friend:

As the state's second largest industry, agriculture is one of the lifelines for Michigan economic health. Here at home, it is an important part of the economic vitality and quality of life in the 21st Senate District. As your State Senator, I want to provide you with a legislative update on our work to preserve and support our agricultural community.

I would also like to share some information that may be helpful to you. For more information on these topics, or any other legislative issue, please contact me toll-free at (866) 305-2121 or e-mail at senrjelinek@senate.michigan.gov.

Best wishes for a productive and prosperous season!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ron Jelinek".

Ron Jelinek
State Senator

Boosting Michigan's Rural Economy

Michigan's rural areas could receive a much-needed economic boost under recently introduced legislation. Rural areas are a great place to live and raise a family, but often face a competitive disadvantage for business and job creation. A smaller labor pool and a smaller tax base, which limits infrastructure development, can stunt economic growth opportunities. To support rural job development, the proposal would:

- Encourage trained workers to remain in rural areas through an educational loan repayment incentive. It would also create an agricultural processing apprenticeship program to increase skilled labor and help young people gain practical work skills.
- Require the Michigan Broadband Development Authority to allot \$1 million each year to rural, underserved areas through the seed capital loan program.
- Create a \$500 tax credit for landowners and companies for building cell phone towers in rural areas.
- Establish a low-interest loan program for methane digesters and a property tax exemption for agricultural renewable energy systems.
- Create an agriculture tourism zoning commission and an agriculture and rural communities advisory council to look at the effects of government rules and regulations on agricultural businesses.

The ideas for the rural development plan were generated by the agricultural community at an April 2004 food processing summit. For more information on this legislation or to be kept up-to-date on the progress of the package, contact my office toll-free at (866) 305-2121 or by e-mail at senrjelinek@senate.michigan.gov.

2002 Census of Agriculture 21st Senate District

Number of Farms: 2,887

Land in Farms: 517,995

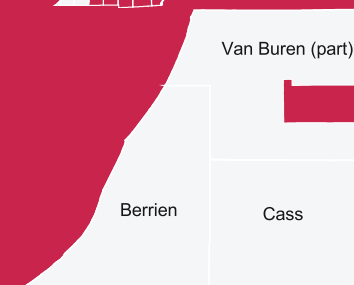
**Average Size of Farm:
179 acres**

**Irrigated Land:
65,746 acres**

**Total Number of
Farm Operators: 4,345**

**Market Value of
Production: \$244,442,000**

**Market Value of
Production, Average
per Farm: \$84,670**





State Senator

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Protecting Investment:

The Michigan Farm Produce Insurance Program

A new program is now in place to help provide a safety net for farmers. Starting this year, farm produce buyers or grain dealers in Michigan are required to collect a .002 premium when farm produce is sold to a dealer. Farm produce includes cereal grains, corn, dry edible beans, small grains, and soybeans. The premiums go to the Michigan Farm Produce Insurance fund to pay farmers in the event of a business failure of a farm produce or grain dealer. The program is voluntary. Farmers who have paid into the fund will be entitled to payment protection. Those producers who request a refund of the premiums paid will not be eligible to receive payment from the fund. More detailed information is available at www.michigan.gov/mda.

The fund is administered by the Michigan Farm Produce Insurance Authority under legislation enacted in 2003. Over the last ten years, the failure of licensed grain dealers in Michigan has resulted in a loss to producers of approximately \$1 million.

Bovine TB Testing is Working

Michigan continues to make progress on eradicating Bovine Tuberculosis. Michigan's efforts to test cattle for Bovine TB and eradicate the disease from both livestock and wildlife have been recognized by two other states. In April, Minnesota amended their import regulations, effectively reopening their markets to Michigan cattle and, in May, Indiana reduced their import restrictions. Both states recognized the efforts of Michigan's livestock owners, veterinarians, and the Michigan Department of Agriculture. Michigan's application for split-state status from the U.S. Department of Agriculture is being reviewed now.

Those wishing to sell cattle in Indiana should contact the Indiana Board of Animal Health at (317) 227-0316 to get details of import requirements and necessary permits. Prevalence of the disease in the wild deer population in Northeast Michigan has also dropped, but efforts there must continue to keep the disease on the decline. For more information about Michigan's bovine TB eradication efforts, please contact the MDA Animal Industry Division Lansing Office at (517) 373-1077. Information is also available online at www.michigan.gov/bovinetb.

Cutting Red Tape

Milk producers and livestock dealers are among those helped by a more efficient state permit and license system under legislation enacted last year. The new laws establish a maximum processing time for licenses and permits and require the Department of Agriculture to return application fees and provide a 15 percent discount the following year if the processing deadline is missed. Public Acts 277, 278, 279, and 280 were part of a Senate effort to dismantle barriers to job creation in Michigan. Visit www.michiganlegislature.org or contact my office for more information.



Managing for Wise Use

By the very nature of their livelihood, many farmers are active conservationists. The Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program (MAEAP) provides farmers with an added tool for environmental stewardship. The program is voluntary and teaches effective practices that comply with state and federal regulations and shows farmers how to find and prevent agricultural pollution risks on their farms.

Along with learning cost-effective management practices, MAEAP participation helps farmers show the public they are "good neighbors" and practice environmentally sound agriculture. With more people moving into rural areas and closer scrutiny of farming operations, good land stewardship helps protect our agricultural heritage. Visit www.maeap.org for full information on the program.

Receive E-Legislative Updates

If you would like to receive periodic legislative updates via e-mail, please send a short note to senrjelinek@senate.michigan.gov. Electronic mail is an inexpensive and convenient method to transmit information to interested citizens.

